

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

### 1. Name of Property

historic name Washington, George, School  
other names/site number Central School; Washington-Lee School

### 2. Location

street & number 205 East Sevier Avenue N/A ☐ not for publication  
city or town Kingsport N/A ☐ vicinity  
stat Tennessee code TN county Sullivan code 163 zip code 37660  
e \_\_\_\_\_

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set for in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer, Tennessee Historical Commission  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. (☐ See Continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- ☐ entered in the National Register.  
☐ See continuation sheet

- ☐ determined eligible for the  
National Register.  
☐ See continuation sheet

- ☐ determined not eligible for the  
National Register

- ☐ removed from the National  
Register.

- ☐ other, (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Washington, George, School  
Name of Property

Sullivan County, Tennessee  
County and State

## 5. Classification

### Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- ☒ private  
☐ public-local  
☐ public-State  
☐ public-Federal

### Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- ☒ building(s)  
☐ district  
☐ site  
☐ structure  
☐ object

### Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in count)

Contributing

Noncontributing

1

0

buildings

sites

structures

objects

1

0

Total

### Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

### Number of Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

## 6. Function or Use

### Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION/School

### Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

VACANT/Work in progress

## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

No Style

### Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete

walls Brick

roof Asphalt/Built-up

other Concrete; Metal

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☒ **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☐ **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ **D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- ☐ **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ **B** removed from its original location.
- ☐ **C** moved from its original location.
- ☐ **D** a cemetery.
- ☐ **E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ **F** a commemorative property
- ☒ **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

### Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Education

### Period of Significance

ca. 1918-1961

### Significant Dates

ca. 1918, 1951

### Significant Person

(complete if Criterion B is marked)

N/A

### Cultural Affiliation

N/A

### Architect/Builder

Beeson, D.R.

### Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

### Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

### Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☒ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ Previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey  
# \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering  
Record # \_\_\_\_\_

### Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State Agency
- ☐ Federal Agency
- ☐ Local Government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other

Name of repository:

Washington, George, School  
Name of Property

Sullivan County, Tennessee  
County and State

## 10. Geographical Data

**Acreage of Property** Approximately 3 acres Kingsport TN-VA 188 SE

### UTM References

(place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 17 360938 4045690  
Zone Easting Northing  
2 \_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing  
4 \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ See continuation sheet

### Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

### Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Susannah V. Franklin, Architectural Historian  
organization Landmark Asset Services date 6/30/06  
street & number 406 East Fourth Street telephone (336) 714-8917  
city or town Winston-Salem state NC zip code 27101

### Additional Documentation

submit the following items with the completed form:

### Continuation Sheets

### Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 Or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

### Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

### Additional items

(Check with the SHPO) or FPO for any additional items

## Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name George Washington School, LLC , c/o Jim Sari  
street & number 406 East Fourth Street telephone (336) 722-9871  
city or town Winston-Salem state NC zip code 27101

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listing. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*)

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P. O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20303.

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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Washington, George, School  
Sullivan County, Tennessee

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## Narrative Description

The former George Washington School, built c. 1918, is located in Kingsport, Tennessee (population 44,905) in Sullivan County close to the downtown and city center. The school is situated on the southwest corner of Watauga and Sevier avenues on approximately three acres. It sits roughly thirty feet back from Sevier Avenue on a basically flat lot. A concrete walkway leads from a sidewalk to the main front entrance. Two secondary entrances are accessed via short concrete walkways off of Watauga Avenue. A fenced grassy area to the south of the building was a play area and ball field. There is some parking along the rear of the building which is accessed from a wide alley. The immediately surrounding properties are residential. The commercial area of the town begins a block to the west.

The original portion of the school was built c. 1918. In 1951 a large addition was built on the north elevation. The addition extends to the west of the building and creates a partially enclosed courtyard area at the rear of the building. A boiler room extends south from the west end of the addition. The building has a brick veneer with a concrete foundation and a flat roof. Windows in the original section are aluminum, while the 1951 addition contains steel windows. All windows open as hopper windows.

The east facade is a six-bay, two-floor over raised basement rectangular structure. The center bay and two end bays are slightly projecting. It is sheathed in 6:1 common bond brick veneer with a concrete water table below the basement level windows. There is a concrete belt course above the basement level windows and second-story windows. The belt course above the second floor has decorative molding. Each bay contains banks of windows each with three sets of six-light aluminum windows, installed in the school in 1968 when the original wood, six-over-six windows were removed. The windows have concrete sills. The main entry is in the center bay and features a simple stepped parapet roofline, double-leaf metal entry doors and fluted concrete pilasters. The windows in the entry bay are slightly recessed and decorative concrete elements step back from the main wall to the windows. The belt courses do not extend onto the entry bay. This entry bay was altered to its current appearance at the time of the 1951 addition, and was designed to match the two entrances on the north elevation. The center first-floor window is missing and the opening is covered. There is a cantilevered canopy over the entrance and "George Washington School" is spelled out on the parapet roof with metal letters. The north end bay of the front façade is the end of the 1951 addition, featuring similar six-light steel windows, concrete water table and belt courses. Unlike the original section, the top belt course on the 1951 addition is plain without any decorative molding.

The north elevation, added in 1951, extends along Watauga Avenue and is six-bays and two-floors over a raised basement. It is sheathed in 6:1 common bond brick veneer with a concrete water table below the basement level windows and unadorned concrete belt courses located above the basement and second floor windows. It features a parapet roofline. Each bay has large banks of multiple sets of steel, six-light windows. Two entrances are located in slightly projecting bays on

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the east and west ends of the elevation. Flat, cantilevered awnings cover the two entrances. The entrances each have double-leaf metal doors with a fluted concrete surround. A large opening filled with glass blocks rises vertically from the top of the doors to the top of the second floor.

The west elevation of the 1951 addition has a single entrance on the basement level with double leaf doors and a cantilevered canopy. Six-light steel windows are directly above the entrance on the first and second floors. The one-story boiler room, which extends south from the addition, has a single entrance on its west elevation with double-leaf metal doors and a window opening that has been covered over. The south elevation of the boiler room also has a single entrance with double-leaf doors. A large brick chimney rises on the south wall of the addition at its intersection with the boiler room. The south elevation of the addition has large banks of six-light steel windows and an unadorned concrete belt course above the second story windows.

The west elevation of the 1918 school is also two stories over a raised basement with concrete water table, parapet roofline, aluminum windows and brick veneer. The concrete belt course above the second floor is adorned with decorative molding. The west elevation of the original 1918 school block features a large projecting auditorium with a decorative parapet roofline and four unadorned, square engaged columns that divide the auditorium into five bays. Each bay has three sets of six-light aluminum windows that were added in 1968. Several sets of windows on the auditorium are covered over. A blank concrete panel is set in the parapet wall of the center bay and in the parapet wall of the south elevation of the auditorium. An exterior metal staircase leads to entrances located on the first and second floors of the south elevation of the auditorium. The entrances have single metal doors set in unadorned surrounds.

The south elevation of the 1918 block is three bays and two stories over a raised basement. A double-leaf metal entry in the basement level is located under an original double stair that leads to an entrance on the first floor. The entrance to the first floor has sidelights that have been covered over. Small, paired windows on this elevation have been bricked in, and the original parapet decoration in the center bay has been removed and filled in with brick, creating a flat, uniform parapet roofline. The window openings in the basement and second floor are rectangular, while the window openings on the first floor are arched with keystones. A large window opening in the center bay is now covered with corrugated metal, but will be restored, based on photographic evidence during the rehabilitation of the building.

## Interior

The gymnasium is located in the projecting auditorium bay on the west elevation. The gymnasium retains wood floors, metal support and truss system, and plaster walls. Windows in the gym have been covered with metal. The gymnasium is two stories tall and is located directly under the auditorium. Staircases on the north and south ends of the gymnasium lead up to the basement level.

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In the raised basement level, the cafeteria and kitchen run almost the full length of the 1951 wing. The lower portion of the walls are covered with tile and the upper portions are plaster. These rooms also have acoustical tile ceilings and asbestos tile floors. Four metal support posts run the length of the cafeteria. The kitchen and food storage rooms are north of the cafeteria.

The raised basement level of the 1918 section contains classrooms with wood and carpeted floors, plaster walls, and acoustical tile ceilings. The classrooms still retain their chalkboards. A long double-loaded corridor runs the length of this section and accesses the classrooms, bathrooms and stairs leading down to the gymnasium. Banks of metal lockers are along the walls of the corridor. The floor of the corridor is carpeted and the walls are plaster. Wood doors with single panes of glass open to the classrooms.

The main entrances are located in the raised basement. Three large stairwells lead from the basement level to the first and second floors. The stairwells have brick walls and metal handrails. A large bank of glass blocks light the stairwells in the 1951 section. A stairwell leads directly from the entrance on the east façade to the first floor. The basement level is not accessible from the east façade entrance.

On the first floor a stairwell leads from the main front entry to the main corridor of the 1918 block. The corridor is double-loaded and accesses bathrooms, classrooms, offices, and the two-story auditorium. The floors of the halls have been covered with carpet, the ceilings have acoustical tiles, and the walls are plaster. A typical classroom has wood floors, though some are covered with carpet, plaster walls, and acoustical tile ceilings. Many classrooms also have built-in metal lockers and chalkboards. The auditorium retains the original stage and plaster walls. The stage is in an arched opening and is accessed by a set of five steps. The auditorium floors are covered with carpet. The balcony area was enclosed in the 1990s to make more classroom space. Areas behind the stage remain intact, and seem to have been used for a nurses area and classrooms most recently.

A single-loaded corridor in the 1951 block provides access to classrooms and the library on the first floor. The corridor walls are covered with tile along the lower portions and plaster in the upper portions. Interior classroom configuration remains basically unaltered with the exception of some later partition walls added to form offices. The library was added in the 1980s, created from two classrooms in the 1951 block. The classrooms and library have plaster walls and acoustical tile ceilings. Stairwells in the 1951 section have brick walls, concrete floors, and streamlined metal handrails.

The second floor has the same basic configuration as the first floor. A double-loaded corridor provides access to classrooms and restrooms. The corridor has carpeting on the floor, plaster walls, and acoustical tile ceiling. The classrooms have wood or carpeted floors and plaster walls. Some metal lockers remain in the corridor and classrooms. The former balcony space for the auditorium that was made into classrooms is located on this floor. These classrooms contain three

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steps that formerly held auditorium seating. The 1951 section has a single-loaded corridor giving access to three classrooms and an office. The classrooms have plaster walls and acoustical tile ceilings. They also retain their original chalkboards.

As part of an adaptive reuse, the school will undergo minor interior changes to create apartment and community spaces. The main public spaces of the corridors, auditorium and gymnasium will remain largely intact. An addition will be added onto the boiler room at the rear of the building. No other major changes to the exterior of the building will occur. These changes will be done in accordance to the Secretary of the Interior's standards.



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Statement of Significance

The George Washington School is being nominated for inclusion in the National Register under criterion A for its local significance in education. The property meets criteria consideration as a property that has significance within the last fifty years. Originally named the Central School, it was the first school constructed after the charter for the city of Kingsport was granted in 1917 and was the first municipally funded school in Kingsport. Originally settled in 1822 a new Kingsport was plotted near the older town and was designed as a "model city" by renowned planner Dr. John Nolen. Kingsport was reinvented as a planned city, focused on industry and community. Education was a high priority in the new city and Nolen planned for schools in his design. Two of these were built as planned, with George Washington being the first, constructed in 1918. The school served the growing population of Kingsport for over seventy-five years. Changing with the times, George Washington was expanded in 1951 to accommodate population growth and was the first school in Kingsport to integrate in 1961.

Kingsport, or King's Port, was originally settled in 1822. Primarily an agricultural area, the town grew slowly during the nineteenth century. Transportation of southwest Virginia's resources along the Holston River was the main economic draw to Kingsport. A boatyard was built and shipping spurred growth of a foundry, some mills and a mill store along the river. Shipping salt, iron, and tobacco to as far away as Nashville and New Orleans, the area grew in the early half of the nineteenth century.

Kingsport's prosperity dwindled in the latter half of the nineteenth century when water travel gave way to rail transportation and the East Tennessee, Virginia, and Georgia Railroad bypassed Kingsport in favor of Jonesborough. This, combined with the aftermath of the Civil War, caused the agricultural economy and the boatyard to diminish. While the population declined and the economy slowed after the war, education was nonetheless emerging as early as the 1870s when the first Kingsport High School appears in county records. This school was no doubt created in response to the Tennessee Public School Act of 1873, which provided state funds for the construction of county schools.<sup>1</sup> There were only three graded schools in Sullivan County prior to the 1880s. Usually public schools were operated yearly until funds ran out, and often money was raised from the community as well. In the late 1800s a poll tax of \$1.50 was the primary source of school revenue and many private citizens contributed additional money to the fund because they were interested in their childrens' welfare.<sup>2</sup> Early schools often lacked desks, water buckets, chalkboards, chalk and firewood. Teachers and parents were responsible for upkeep and repair of

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<sup>1</sup> Kingsport Retired Teachers Association. *Eighty Years of Enlightenment: Recollections of Kingsport Teachers*. Kingsport, Tennessee: Collier's Printing Co., 1997, p. 2-3.

<sup>2</sup> Barnes, Thelma Gray. *Adventures in Education: Sullivan County, 1773-1983*. Sullivan County Retired Teachers Association, p. 203.

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the buildings. The economic situation and educational system in the Kingsport area were lacking at the close of the nineteenth century.

At the dawn of the twentieth century three entrepreneurs brought what would become the Clinchfield Railroad through the city and literally built modern Kingsport. In 1905, George L. Carter bought the remnants of a failed rail line from Charleston, S.C. to Cincinnati, OH., mainly to haul coal and other freight. Towns along the route were needed to support industrial development and Carter purchased thousands of acres of land along the line with the intention of constructing a series of cities along the line to support it. He enlisted the help of his brother-in-law, J. Fred Johnson to serve as the purchasing agent for the railroad. Realizing that the project would take more capital to produce than he alone could provide, he brought in John B. Dennis, an associate with the Blair Co., a municipal bond company out of New York.<sup>3</sup>

By 1915 the 277-mile railroad was completed from South Carolina to Kentucky and the entrepreneurs turned their full attention to building the city of Kingsport. This new city was located on a site very near the original Kingsport, but was built from scratch in the early 1900s, eventually annexing Old Kingsport.<sup>4</sup> While Carter had been instrumental in selecting the site for the future city in 1906, he severed his connection with the Kingsport area around 1914 and did not see his plans come to fruition with the actual establishment of Kingsport.<sup>5</sup> In 1906 he recruited an engineer to survey and draft an initial plan for the city. It included the semi-circle arrangement. In 1915, recognizing the "importance of careful engineering design to the layout of a city to be built 'from scratch'," Dennis, Carter's former partner, had become the leading force in the Kingsport project and enlisted the talents of Dr. John Nolen, "The Father of City Planning" to conceive a planned city for 50,000 people.<sup>6</sup>

Known as the "Model City", Kingsport was to focus on industry and community, with Nolen's plan calling for industry along the river, commercial activity on the middle ground, and residences on the higher ground. This plan drew on the 1906 layout of the city, which included a core area with a semicircle known as Church Circle (NR 4/11/1973). The use of circumferential and radial lines produced "the maximum amount of desirable lots."<sup>7</sup> In a time when the grid system dominated city planning, Nolen and others were proponents of green spaces, prominent vistas, and social reform in cities. Upon arriving in Kingsport in 1916, Nolen declared it, "a wasteland, temporary town laid out grid fashion in contrast to some of the most verdant countryside..."<sup>8</sup> By the time Kingsport was designed, however, Nolen described it "as his most significant career town planning

<sup>3</sup> Kingsport, p. 16.

<sup>4</sup> Wolfe, Margaret Ripley. *Kingsport, Tennessee: A Planned American City*. Lexington, Kentucky: University of Kentucky Press, 1987, p. 13.

<sup>5</sup> Wolfe, p. 19.

<sup>6</sup> Kingsport, 3.

<sup>7</sup> Wolfe, p. 49.

<sup>8</sup> Wolfe, 13.

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accomplishment.”<sup>9</sup> Nolen devised a comprehensive plan for the city, and the 1919 General Map of Kingsport, Tennessee, identified as Plan No. 75, was the end result of the ideas and plans generated by Nolen’s office. It anticipated developments of more residential areas, including Armstrong Village, a model black community. The plan was implemented in stages and not all elements were executed. Some site choices such as the bank and post office were changed, and a large city park was eliminated.

Prior to the 1918 plan, education in the Kingsport area had been largely private with only a few public county schools. The existing schools were not in good condition, suffering from neglect and overcrowding. The state of Tennessee enacted legislation between 1907 and 1917 replacing district schools with county school boards, increasing state money for education, requiring teacher certification, mandating that each county have one high school, etc. This legislation along with growing industry in Kingsport did much to help the educational system. Local industries directly supported education. In 1913, before the town was officially incorporated, local businesses contributed \$4000 for the construction of a Normal School. It had three classrooms with cloakrooms and a small hall for public and school functions. Despite this, the building was quickly outgrown. Because it had become such a focal point of the community it was sold to a church and remodeled for its use.

Dennis believed strongly in the importance of education and with the incorporation of Kingsport, “education became a priority of city officials.” The first Board of Education, consisting of five members, was appointed and by 1918 it was decided that the first city-built school building would be constructed. Eugene M. Crouch, the first superintendent of the Kingsport City Schools, in office from 1918 to 1921, was educated at Columbia University and was “well aware of current ideas among leading educators of the country.”<sup>10</sup> Crouch implemented the 6-3-3 mode, still used in 1996 with the only changes a result of school enrollments. The 6-3-3 refers to the years in elementary (6), junior high school (3) and high school(3). The Kingsport schools followed the Gary Plan (named for Gary, Indiana) focusing on the importance of work, study, and play “as basic components of academic training.”<sup>11</sup> During Crouch’s term the school system grew from 19 teachers in 1919 to 34 teachers from 13 different states in 1921.<sup>12</sup>

Under the guidance of Crouch, Dennis, and Nolen, Kingsport’s educational system began to take shape. Nolen incorporated schools and public buildings into his city plans. He called for the grouping of buildings into various centers that “suit economic conditions and are readily accessible to the public.”<sup>13</sup> Nolen believed that, “schools and playgrounds should receive the thoughtful

<sup>9</sup> *Kingsport, Tennessee: Excellence of Opportunity*. Kingsport, TN: Rotary Club of Kingsport, 1998, 4.

<sup>10</sup> Kingsport Retired Teachers Association, p. 20.

<sup>11</sup> Wolfe, p. 102.

<sup>12</sup> Eldreth, Lisa. “Mitchell first principal, but never superintendent.” *Kingsport Times News*, March 8, 1992.

<sup>13</sup> Nolen, John. *New Ideals in the Planning of Cities, Towns and Villages*. New York City: American City Bureau, 1919, p. 77.

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attention of all residents, for they are formative in a large measure of the character of the coming generations.”<sup>14</sup> He argued for the planning of schools at the time of development and for the location of schools within half-mile walking distance of its students. Nolen put his ideas into practice in Kingsport, incorporating the educational needs of the community in his plan.

As part of his master plan, four schools were shown in Nolen’s original plans for Kingsport; “one at the present site of Kingsport’s Renaissance Center, one in the area called Lovedale tract, one in Armstrong Village, and one on Watauga Street.”<sup>15</sup> Unfortunately, Nolen’s plan was again executed only to a limited degree. Two of Nolen’s schools were constructed as planned. The Central School, later known as George Washington School, was completed on Watauga Street in 1918 and Jackson School was constructed in the Lovedale area in 1920. The location of George Washington School in the midst of a residential area near the city center reflects Nolen’s ideal of schools being easily accessible and having a visible place within the community. Open space was set aside on the lot to give the neighborhood and the students a place for recreation.

Kingsport’s first municipal bond was issued in 1917 in the amount of \$150,000 to fund the school construction. The construction and design of the Central School was intended to produce a fully modern and efficient school building for the time. Architect D. R. Beeson of Johnson City designed the school to serve grades one through twelve. Other well-known buildings designed by Beeson in the region include Shelbridge (NR 12/14/95) and the Montrose Court Apartments (NR 4/21/1980) in Johnson City. W.H. Allen from Elizabethton was hired to be the superintendent of the project at a salary of \$250 per month. The school building housed twenty rooms and an auditorium; ample room to house students that had attended classes in the Methodist Church on Broad Street and other available rooms throughout the city while the school was being constructed.

The first graduating class held commencement exercises in June of 1919. That same year Superintendent Crouch is credited with updating mandatory school attendance for the city schools from the ages of eight to fourteen to the ages of seven to sixteen.<sup>16</sup> Central continued to serve all grades until 1926 when Dobyys-Bennett High School was constructed for grades seven through twelve. Central School was renamed George Washington School, and served as an elementary school.<sup>17</sup> Dobyys-Bennett was financed with an emergency bond issued by the city in the amount of \$250,000.<sup>18</sup> The principal of Washington, Charles K. Koffman, moved to the new high school. “From its humble origins, the Kingsport School System advanced significantly within a decade,”

<sup>14</sup> Nolen, John. *Comprehensive City Plan: Sarasota, Florida*. 1925. [www.sarasotagov.com/Planning/NolenPlan/NolenPlan.htm](http://www.sarasotagov.com/Planning/NolenPlan/NolenPlan.htm)

<sup>15</sup> “Kingsport 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary: The Model City, 1917-1992.” *Kingsport Times News Progress Edition*. 8 March 1992.

<sup>16</sup> Kingsport Retired Teachers Association, p. 21.

<sup>17</sup> Kingsport Retired Teachers Association, p. 88.

<sup>18</sup> Wolfe, 102.

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and by 1927 the Kingsport System had five modern school buildings.<sup>19</sup> In 1928 a long-promised modern black school was constructed as Douglass High School near downtown.

By the end of the 1920s Kingsport, a fabricated industrial community that co-founder J. Fred Johnson had called “a laboratory experiment in cooperation,” was a success.<sup>20</sup> During the 1920s and 30s the economy of the city continued to grow. Kingsport lured the Eastman Kodak Co., Mead Fiber Co., and many other prominent businesses. Other companies such as Blue Ridge Glass and the Kingsport Press were formed. New jobs brought more people to the area. From 1935 to 1945 industrial jobs in the city quintupled.<sup>21</sup> Kingsport flourished during World War II with Tennessee Eastman receiving contracts with the U.S. government. The wartime baby boom again created the need for more schools in Kingsport. The county population increased from around 600,000 in 1947 to almost 650,000 in 1952.<sup>22</sup>

In conjunction with economic and population growth, the 1930s-50s witnessed a series of additions and renovations to the Kingsport schools as well as the addition of more art and music enrichment programs at the schools. Jackson School experienced internal changes in 1935, including the improvement of lunchroom facilities and the addition of a series of rooms. In 1936, Washington School improved its dining facilities. A new school, James Madison, was completed in the west end of town in 1949, the same year that Lincoln Elementary received an addition that included seven classrooms, a library, art room, music room, and cafeteria.

Renovations and expansions were typical of Kingsport schools and schools across Tennessee at mid-century as the education system sought to serve the needs of a continually growing population. In 1947 an additional sales tax was imposed to help fund needed teachers, buses, and building renovations and additions.<sup>23</sup> When the Washington School was constructed in 1918, as the Central School, it did not have electrical outlets in the individual classrooms. By 1946-47, the need for adequate outlets and updated electrical equipment could not be ignored. Requests for “improvements such as a new cafeteria, a new stove, remodeling of all classrooms with outlets, fluorescent lighting, and blackout shades for the auditorium” were brought before the board during that term. In 1949 George Washington merged with Robert E. Lee School and was renamed the Washington-Lee School. Necessary physical updates, including the electrical, cafeteria, lighting, etc. were not completed until September of 1951 when a major addition, remodeling of the front entrance, and other changes were made to the Washington-Lee School at a cost of \$325,000.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Wolfe, 102.

<sup>20</sup> Wolfe, 82.

<sup>21</sup> Kingsport, 21.

<sup>22</sup> “Enrollment in Kingsport, county Schools shows Post-War Increase.” *Kingsport Times*.

<sup>23</sup> Parks, Joseph H. and Stanley J. Folmsbee. *The Story of Tennessee*. Harlow Publishers Corporation: Norman, Oklahoma and Chattanooga, Tennessee, 1963.

<sup>24</sup> Barnes, 203.

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Sullivan County, Tennessee

Redistricting took place in this same year and some students from Lincoln School were redistricted to attend the remodeled Washington-Lee until a new school could be built. Remodeling also took place at the Dobyns-Bennett School and Junior High School. The total appropriated for these improvements, including some new equipment for Washington-Lee, was \$180,526.02.<sup>25</sup> The new equipment included new classroom, clinic and cafeteria furniture as well as a school piano.<sup>26</sup> This same year a severe storm caused delays to renovation. Metal decking was blown off of the roof, where they were temporarily stored, and they blew into the lawn, trees and sidewalk. About \$150 worth of materials was lost or damaged.<sup>27</sup>

Changes within the school district continued into the 1950s. In 1951, the two-story brick Douglass School was sold by the school district after its African American students were moved to a new, modern school in the Riverview Community.<sup>28</sup> The building was then used to house city welfare offices. Andrew Johnson Elementary was completed in the east end of town in 1954 and Thomas Jefferson Elementary in 1957, after it was deemed impractical to further expand the overcrowded Lincoln or Washington schools. Because of overloading of the existing school staff and public spaces, construction of these new buildings was determined as the solution.

The community was very involved with the Washington-Lee School. There was a strong PTA group from at least the 1940s through the 1960s. They helped sponsor many events at the school, such as Christmas pageants, Founder's Day shows, hobby days, charity drives and many other occasions. They were also involved with school vaccinations during the 1950s.

The Washington-Lee School partially opened its doors to black students in 1961, marking the beginning of integration in the Kingsport City School System after the landmark Supreme Court decision of 1954 that deemed racial discrimination in public education unconstitutional. Much controversy surrounded these events. It was predicted in 1954 that the "colored teachers will be the victims" of this decision and a few months later a lawsuit was brought by two teachers who lost jobs without explanation. Many believed that black students would want to stay in their "colored" schools.<sup>29</sup> In 1955 an advisory committee was established to assist with the gradual integration of black students. The integration process began with elementary schools, and with Washington-Lee in particular. In 1961 the first grade was integrated with plans to integrate one additional grade every year, reaching full integration after twelve years. This slow pace of integration was unacceptable to the black community, and integration of all grade levels was finally achieved by the end of 1965. Though it was integrated, photos from the 1963-64 school year show one or two black students per class, thus it remained a predominately white school.

<sup>25</sup> "School Projects Here Contracted" *Kingsport News*, 1951.

<sup>26</sup> "School Projects Here Contracted" *Kingsport News*, 1951.

<sup>27</sup> "Storm Damages Kingsport Area" *Kingsport News*, 1951.

<sup>28</sup> "Board of Education votes formal release of old Douglass School." *Kingsport Times*. 5 January 1951.

<sup>29</sup> Davis, Virginia. "City School Board Considers New Law." *Kingsport Times*. May 28, 1954.

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Federal aid and new organizational programs evolved in the 1960s and 70s. The 1961 school year began with the anticipation of overcrowding and expecting more than 6,600 students. Ten additional teachers were hired, though a few schools lost teachers including Washington-Lee.<sup>30</sup> The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 provided Title I federal money to assist students below the grade level, while other programs catered to gifted children and provided library resources.<sup>31</sup> Additionally, kindergarten and "ungraded primary programs" became more widespread, as did special education and music classes.<sup>32</sup> There were special classes at George Washington for special needs students, who were grouped together.

The late 1960s and early 1970s marked the decline of central Kingsport. Centers for shopping and residential areas spread out from the city center and continue to do so today. Due to declining student population, in 1975, the Lee School building was closed and the era of Washington-Lee school came to an end. Students remained in the George Washington building, however, and George Washington School adopted its name back. It now housed kindergarten through fifth-grade classes.

The school's library was renovated in 1980, created from two classrooms that were no longer needed due to declining school attendance and rezoning in the school district. In 1982 there were 283 students grades kindergarten through fifth grade as well as a program for handicapped preschoolers in the school.<sup>33</sup> However, enrollment numbers declined steadily throughout the 1980s while changes to the school district and the George Washington School continued. In the early 1990s a portion of the auditorium was enclosed to create additional classroom spaces, but the school had reached the end of its tenure.

A 1989 Capital Improvement Plan provided money for the construction of a new school in Kingsport. Being the oldest school in the city, George Washington was considered outdated and was slated for replacement. The school was officially closed in 1994 after the completion of a new George Washington Elementary, costing eight million dollars. It is west of town on over 22 acres at 1100 Bellingham Road. The new, one-story, modern structure bore the namesake, but not the community connection of the original school.

<sup>30</sup> "6,600 Pupils Expected in City Schools." *Kingsport News*. Friday, August 5, 1960.

<sup>31</sup> Kingsport Retired Teachers Association, p. 93.

<sup>32</sup> Barnes, p. 220.

<sup>33</sup> Barnes, 193.

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The George Washington School remains the school closest to downtown and the center of the city. Most students walked to the school, and George Washington was a neighborhood school. Now students rely more on bussing and live farther from their schools. A gathering place for children, parents and the community, George Washington School was central to Nolen's community plan and fulfilled its purpose.

Built in 1918, immediately following the incorporation of Kingsport and as part of the new city plan, the George Washington School served the educational needs of citizens of Kingsport for over seventy-five years. It inspired students and city residents alike. Ed Frazier, a third generation former student of George Washington School, calls the school, "a very special place," and was so moved by the student-teacher experience at George Washington that he is currently seeking a second degree in elementary education so that he can, "make the biggest impact," in the future of Kingsport.<sup>34</sup> Retaining a high degree of historic integrity, George Washington School was the first city-built school and was a central part of the community in Kingsport for generations.

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<sup>34</sup> Phone interview with Ed Frazier, 11 June 2006.



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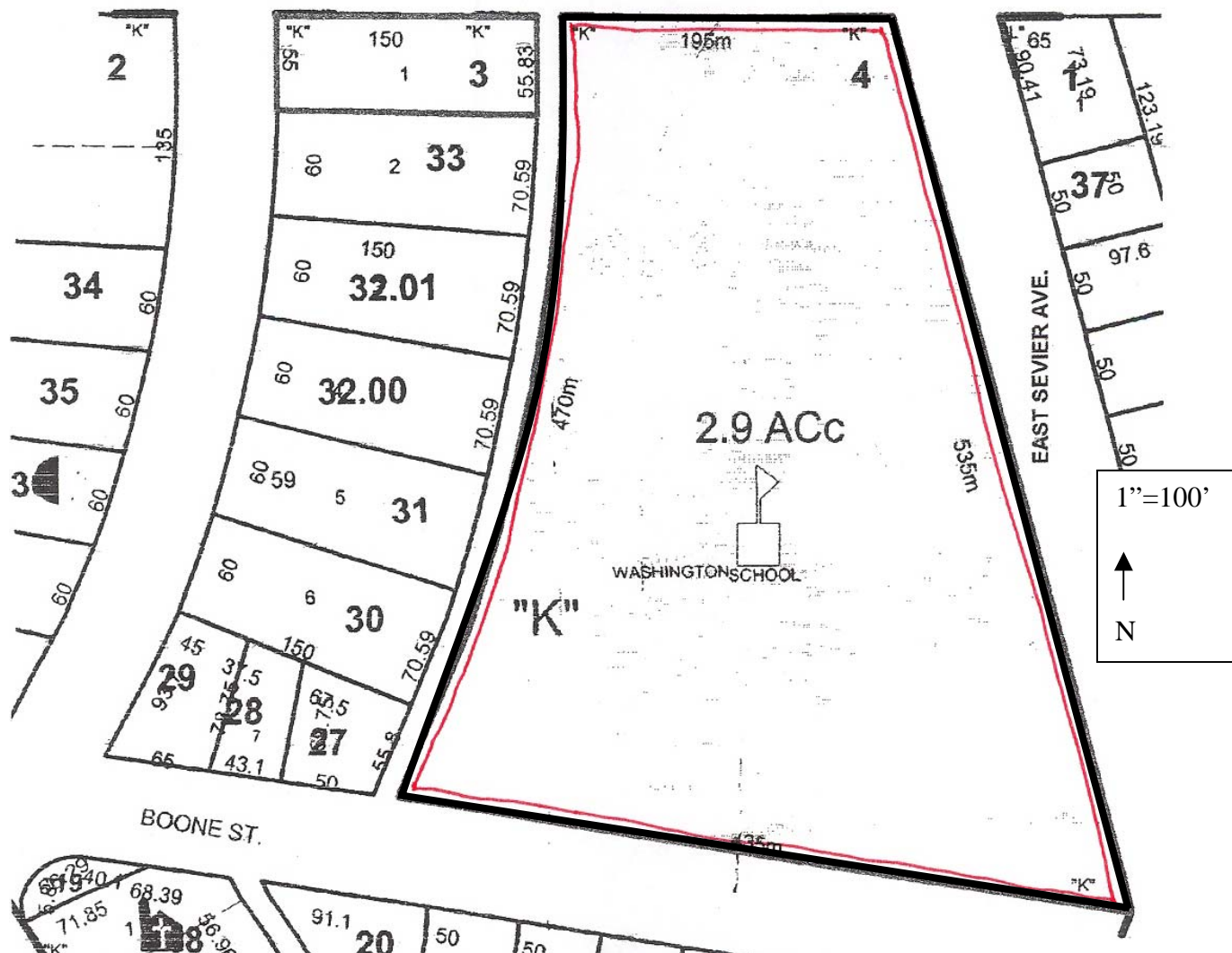
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## Verbal Boundary Justification

The George Washington School is located at 205 East Sevier Avenue. The boundary of the property is shown on the enclosed map.

## Boundary Justification

The nominated property includes the school building and surrounding property as shown on included map. This boundary is in keeping with its historic location and boundaries, including the original school and addition as well as some surrounding historic green space and parking behind the building.



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## PHOTOGRAPHS

George Washington School  
Sullivan County, Tennessee

Photographer: Susannah Franklin  
Date: July 2006  
Location of Negatives: Tennessee Historical Commission  
2941 Lebanon Road  
Nashville, TN 37214

1 of 30  
East façade, photographer facing southwest.

2 of 30  
East façade and green space south of school, photographer facing southwest.

3 of 30  
Northeast corner of school, photographer facing southwest.

4 of 30  
East façade, photographer facing west.

5 of 30  
Southeast corner of school, photographer facing northwest.

6 of 30  
South elevation, photographer facing north.

7 of 30  
West elevation of 1918 section and south elevation of 1951 section, photographer facing northeast.

8 of 30  
South elevation of 1951 section, photographer facing north.

9 of 30  
West elevation of 1918 section, photographer facing east.

10 of 30

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Detail of west elevation, photographer facing east.

11 of 30

South elevation of 1951 section, photographer facing northeast.

12 of 30

North elevation, photographer facing south.

13 of 30

Entry bay on north elevation, photographer facing south.

14 of 30

West stair hall in 1951 section, photographer facing north.

15 of 30

East stair hall in 1951 section, photographer facing north.

16 of 30

East stair hall in 1951 section, photographer facing north.

17 of 30

Main stair hall in 1918 section, photographer facing east.

18 of 30

Auditorium, photographer facing north.

19 of 30

Auditorium, photographer facing west.

20 of 30

Corridor in the 1918 section, photographer facing north.

21 of 30

Corridor in 1951 section, photographer facing west.

22 of 30

South stair hall in 1918 section, photographer facing south.

23 of 30

Detail of door transom, photographer facing east.

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24 of 30

Cafeteria, photographer facing east.

25 of 30

Kitchen, photographer facing southeast.

26 of 30

Corridor in basement of 1951 section, photographer facing west.

27 of 30

Classroom space.

28 of 30

Classroom space.

29 of 30

Classroom space.

30 of 30

Classroom space.